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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Wednesday, July 12, 1944

Subject: "TOMATOES" -- Information from distribution officials of the War Food Administration.

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What is your guess on this puzzling commodity "aa" in a grocer's column...:

"Easy to look at, improves with cultivation, mixes well in almost any company, and contributes to the general health of a community". The grocer might have added: "Predecessors have a colorful history...friendly with the Mexican Indians...courted by French noblemen...accused of murdering a child named Elizabeth Clark of Trenton, New Jersey...and brought up before the Supreme Court of the United States. Today our family is sought after by rich and poor."

Animal, mineral or vegetable, you ask? That's the question discussed and decided by the Supreme Court in 1893 in relation to a tariff problem...that tomatoes ...there you have it, TOMATOES...while they are a fruit, botanically speaking, are vegetables in the language of common usage. But not even the highest court in the land can pigeonhole tomatoes. Fruit or vegetable, tomatoes are at home on any table, in any course.

From June through October fresh tomatoes usually appear in the markets all over the United States. The amount and price varies, of course, with the weather and transportation facilities. Although tomatoes are easy to grow, they are particular about their diet of sun and rain. Recognizing this and civilians' needs for tomatoes in their diet...Victory Gardeners have planted extra tomato plants this summer to assure themselves and their families enough for their own use, both fresh during the season and canned for next winter when the commercial supply for civilians will be light.



The efficiency rating of tomatoes has climbed a long way since the days when they were known as love apples...admired for their beauty and feared for their supposed poisonous qualities. Today we not only know they are good to eat, but rate an excellent score on two counts...Vitamin C and Vitamin A. Their acidity helps to retain Vitamin C as it also does in citrus fruits. These two and raw cabbage are the Big Three that comprise Group II of the Basic Seven.

Cooked or canned...at home or commercially...tomatoes hit a high note on the dietetic C scale. One cup of tomato juice fairly thick with pulp should furnish a large proportion of the day's requirement for Vitamin C. Like most members of the vegetable family they are best eaten fresh from the garden. Next best is fresh from the refrigerator.

Since Vitamin C cannot be stored in the body it's daily intake for everybody is most important. Although half a cup of fresh unstrained orange juice is equivalent to about one cup of tomato juice in Vitamin C value, tomatoes are often much more than twice as available as oranges. Because they grow in most sections of the country a long season of the year and because they are easy to can, tomatoes are available to low income groups when other sources of Vitamin C are not. Then, too, tomatoes have Vitamin A which citrus fruit lacks.

A medium-sized tomato is not satisfied with supplying half the day's requirement of Vitamin C but also supplies about one-fifth the Vitamin A needs.

First choice for most people, in serving tomatoes, is raw, whether they are whole, halved, quartered or juiced. Chopped fine and forced through a sieve, tomatoes may be seasoned with a little onion, lemon juice, and horseradish or tabasco sauce to make a tomato juice cocktail that is attractive, nutritious and appetizing...the all-in-all for the menu-maker.

To peel or not to peel a tomato is often a moot question. If the tomato is scalded for a minute then cooked quickly, the skin comes off paper thin and



food nutrients are not lost. On the other hand, why not eat the skin? What is better for a snack or workaday lunch than a ripe, red tomato, easy to handle in your fingers if the skin serves as a jacket!

To say that tomatoes are good mixers is a mild compliment. They pal with chicken in a salad, hobnob with lamb in a casserole, add zest to a pork or beef stew...and dress up with color and flavor the plainest and fanciest of meals.

A stuffed tomato salad, one of the most popular of summertime dishes, may be an accompaniment to the meal or it may be the main dish. The center of the tomato may be scooped out to form a receiving shell for a great variety of fillings. Or the tomato may be quartered almost to its base to form a petal-like cup for a meat or vegetable salad. For either type the tomatoes hold their shape better if the skin is not removed...and if they are cut and salted just before serving.

Filled with cottage cheese, chopped chives, nuts, and mayonnaise a tomato is a salad to write home about. Diced chicken, lamb, ham, veal or shrimp is combined with diced celery, green pepper, hard cooked egg and mayonnaise makes a filling fit for -- your best friend.



